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Ellen Puré Named Chair of the Department of Animal Biology

On July 1, 2013, Ellen Puré, PhD, assumed the position of Chair of the Department of Animal Biology at Penn Vet.

As Chair, Dr. Puré will lead the department in performing pioneering basic and translational research, oversee the training of veterinary students, and participate in undergraduate and graduate training programs at Penn Vet.

Penn Vet’s Department of Animal Biology is recognized as one of the foremost basic science departments in veterinary medicine. The department is home to 24 faculty members whose research interests fall within the fields of cancer biology, development, stem cell biology and regenerative medicine, neuroscience, metabolism and endocrinology, and the biochemical basis of disease.

Penn Vet’s unique proximity to world-class academic veterinary and medical hospitals provides ample opportunity for collaboration, resulting in cutting-edge basic and comparative translational research to advance both animal and human medicine. Forging these connections across disciplines and departments is particularly important to Dr. Puré, as she looks to align the basic science effort with the clinical mission of Penn Vet.

“I look forward to driving the direction of our research based on the most prevalent and difficult problems facing veterinary medicine, and then taking what we learn and translating it into utility in the clinic,” said Dr. Puré.

“The incredible quality of the science both in the animal biology department and at the school as a whole is exciting. And no matter how diverse biology is, there are always common threads that bring together the best minds across multiple disciplines. I am eager to engage with my colleagues in this interdisciplinary manner so that we can tackle not only organ-specific diseases, but also the cadre of systemic and multi-organ diseases.”

Dr. Puré will also play an integral role in keeping Penn Vet at the cutting-edge of technology. “My goal is to complement the state-of-the-art imaging that exists here at the molecular and cellular level by bringing it to whole animals. This way, when we study disease in animals, we are doing it in the intact animal over time – just as we do in patients.” To initiate this important effort, Dr. Puré is bringing in new imaging modalities – bioluminescence imaging and, soon to follow, ultrasound – to analyze disease progression and evaluate drug/treatment efficacy in animals in a non-invasive manner.

Prior to joining Penn Vet, Dr. Puré served as Professor of Cellular and Molecular Oncogenesis at The Wistar Institute and as Wistar Professor of Medicine, Microbiology, and Pharmacology at the University of Pennsylvania’s Perelman School of Medicine.

The Puré Laboratory studies the molecular and cellular mechanisms of inflammation and fibrosis, which play significant roles in a wide array of diseases, including atherosclerosis, asthma, rheumatoid arthritis, pulmonary fibrosis, and cancer.

Dr. Puré first joined The Wistar Institute in 1992 as an associate professor, arriving from the Rockefeller University, where she was an assistant professor from 1984 to 1992 and assistant dean from 1988 to 1990. She received her bachelor’s degree from Washington University and a PhD in immunology from the University of Texas-Southwestern Medical School.